

7 bay firms rank on commuter list

EPA singles out 20 workplaces in U.S. that foster clean air

By Ryan Kim

Silicon Valley, home to some of the Bay Area's most punishing commutes, boasts seven companies that rank among the nation's top 20 Best Workplaces for Commuters, according to a list released by the Environmental Protection Agency today.

Intel led the second annual list of companies with the most comprehensive commuter benefits program, followed closely by Oracle and San Diego's Qualcomm, which were both tied for second. It was the second consecutive year that the chipmaker garnered the top spot. The list also includes Silicon Valley titans Sun Microsystems, Cisco Systems, Advanced Micro Devices, Hewlett-Packard and Apple Computer.

The Best Workplace for Commuters rankings recognize the companies for their efforts in reducing fuel consumption, vehicle emissions and traffic congestion. The awards are especially significant considering the dramatic rise in fuel prices.

"The companies recognized today are setting the pace for all employers," EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson said. "Commuter benefits are smart for the environment, smart for employees and smart for the bottom line."

To qualify for the rankings, the companies had to offer significant com-

Firms that help cut traffic congestion

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Intel | 11. EMC Corp. |
| 2. (tie) Qualcomm | 12. Boeing |
| 2. (tie) Oracle | 13. (tie) Devon Energy |
| 4. Sun Microsystems | 13. (tie) El Paso Corp. |
| 5. Microsoft | 13. (tie) Nike |
| 6. (tie) Texas Instruments | 16. Hewlett-Packard |
| 6. (tie) Cisco Systems | 17. (tie) IBM |
| 8. Advanced Micro Devices | 17. (tie) Reliant Energy |
| 9. Anadarko Petroleum | 19. Wyeth |
| 10. Safeco | 20. Apple Computer |

muting programs, including transit subsidies, shuttle services, carpool incentives, flexible working conditions and access to an emergency ride home service.

The rankings were based on the percentage of a company's workforce with access to a commuter program. The study did not measure how many employees actually use the services. Intel led the way in making these commuting benefits available to 92 percent of its employees in the United States.

Johnson said the companies are stepping up their efforts to increase the number of their employees who are eligible for the benefits. He said that last year, the number of employees covered by the benefits grew by 75 percent among the top 20 companies, to about 350,000 workers.

The growing use of commuting alternatives has made an impact on the environment and in decreasing employees' gas costs, said Johnson. He said the 1,400 companies that participated in the EPA program saved 146 million gallons of gasoline in the past year, prevented the release of 1.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and helped commuters pay \$400 million less for gas.

Mark Gorman, U.S. commute reduction manager at Intel, said the chipmaker takes commuting seriously, not only to remain competitive in acquiring talented workers, but also to protect the environment.

"It's important to be a good corporate citizen and pull our weight," Gorman said. "The way things have gone, transportation has become a huge is-

sue, no matter where you go.”

For some Silicon Valley companies, high gas prices have made commuting programs much more attractive. Sun Microsystems, for instance, has seen a 15 percent jump in shuttle ridership this year for that reason. Oracle officials said it appears employees have been using the company’s subsidized transit tickets and shuttles more lately.

“I think the increasing fuel prices will potentially drive more interest in participating in (the commuter) program,” said David Raduziner, senior director of workplace resources at Sun.

There is no quick answer as to why the Bay Area is so well represented on the list. Some company officials said it was due to the Bay Area’s environmental spirit. Others said tech companies are used to being innovative and are by nature, more capable of offering “telework” opportunities.

And of course, the reality of Silicon Valley’s gridlocked traffic probably has something to do with it too. “The nightmares of commuting here lend itself to a positive environment for alternative transportation efforts,” said Jordan Boyd, manager for workplace services at Oracle.



For employers, it pays to aid workers' commute

By Tony Hartzel

As the cost of commuting rises, so does interest among major companies in helping their employees get to work.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized 90 of the country's Fortune 500 companies last week for providing a host of employee commuting options. One North Texas company, Texas Instruments, again cracked the EPA's top 20 list, ranking as the sixth-best workplace for commuters nationwide.

"To attract the top engineers, we have to offer a good place for them to live. And we all want a healthy environment and less traffic congestion," said Lara Wallentine, TI's environmental, safety and health communications manager. "One of the things we see employees looking for is less stress on the road."

Nationally, the top 20 companies offered transit passes, vanpools or other benefits to about 350,000 workers, almost double the number in 2004. The top five on the list are Intel, Qualcomm, Oracle, Sun Microsystems and Microsoft.

The North Texas Clean Air Coalition recognized 12 local companies this year and 32 local companies in 2004,

ROAD RUNNER

Companies are driven to help

Commuting to work on public transit or by sharing rides has its benefits at some companies.

A North Texas company has again made the EPA's Best Workplaces for Commuters list, ranking sixth nationwide. If fuel costs remain high, more employers will be looking at commuting benefits such as transit passes and vanpool programs to retain workers, EPA officials say.

See Tony Hartzel's Road Runner column, Page 2B.

Also on that page: Why is it taking so long to complete the widening of Rosemeade Parkway between the Bush Turnpike and Marsh Lane?

representing about 72,000 employees. Others announced this year include Blockbuster, Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas and the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce. This year's list was compiled before gas reached \$3 a gallon in September.



▲ As featured on the front page of the Metro Section in all County Editions

"Within the next year, you're going to see a marked increase in the number of people interested," said Brian Boerner, chairman of the North Texas Clean Air Coalition, which sponsored the regional effort to recognize companies that provide commuter benefits.

About 15 to 20 percent of a company's work force is expected to use a commuter program once it is offered. That results in less-stressed employees, reduced vehicle emissions and a way for businesses to retain their workers.

"A lot of companies say it makes good financial sense," said Suzanne Rudz-

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inski, director of the EPA's transportation and regional programs division. For businesses such as hospitals, which compete fiercely for qualified candidates to fill nursing jobs, commuter benefits can be a valuable recruiting tool, Ms. Rudzinski added.

The EPA estimates that the use of commuter benefits by the Fortune 500 companies saves workers about 30 million gallons of gasoline and \$80 million a year.

"It's a benefit that is a lot more valuable than six months ago," said Shannon Morris, project director for the local clean-air coalition.

A company with 1,000 employees can help employees save 50,000 gallons of gas a year with a commuter program, Ms. Rudzinski said. "There is a lot a single employee can do," she said.

To qualify for EPA or regional recognition, employers must provide monthly transit or vanpool passes or a significant telecommuting program; provide three other benefits such as on-site day care, flexible work schedules or lockers and showers for cyclists and walkers; and have a staff member responsible for educating colleagues about commuter benefits.

Most of the top workplaces for commuters nationally have access to a rail line, but that is not essential. Dallas Area Rapid Transit and the Fort Worth Transportation Authority offer extensive vanpool programs. The number of vanpools used by TI employees has risen from six at the beginning of 2005 to 17 this month, including at least one that goes from the Dallas area to Sherman, Ms. Wallentine said.

In some cases, residents who live outside the DART service area, for example, may be eligible for a vanpool if they work in one of the cities that belong to the transit agency. Up to 15 people can share a ride in a DART-supplied van, at costs starting around \$35 a month. DART can even match potential ride-sharing partners.

"Just because you're not on a rail line doesn't mean that transit is not available to you," Mr. Boerner said.

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Best Workplaces for Commuters

Commuter-friendly benefits help relieve pinch at the pump

By **Laura Morsch**
CareerBuilder.com writer

Across the nation, gas prices are hovering around \$3 per gallon, forcing Americans to shell out about 85 cents a gallon more than they did at this time last year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Energy.

With high fuel costs come lean times for many people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers spend an average of 24.3 minutes each way commuting to work. This means employees must dig deeper into their pocketbooks just to get to the office.

Employees at the Boeing office in Puget Sound, Wash., have found one solution -- many of them simply stopped driving to work. Wendy Weaver, the aerospace company's employee transportation administrator, estimates Boeing employees saved 8 million vehicle miles in September alone.

Finding other means of transportation was easy for Boeing employees -- the company was named one of the Environmental Protection Agency's Best Workplaces for Commuters, an annual list of Fortune 500 companies with the best commuter benefits.

The 90 companies named Best Workplaces for Commuters this year are credited with offering commuter benefits to nearly 600,000 employees, conserving nearly 30 million gallons of gasoline and saving more than \$80 million annually, according to the Energy Information Administration

The EPA named these companies the Top 20 Best Workplaces for Commuters in 2005:

1. Intel
2. (tie) QUALCOMM
2. (tie) Oracle
4. Sun Microsystems
5. Microsoft
6. (tie) Texas Instruments
6. (tie) Cisco Systems
8. Advanced Micro Devices
9. Anadarko Petroleum Corporation
10. Safeco Insurance
11. EMC Corporation
12. Boeing
13. (tie) Devon Energy
13. (tie) El Paso Corporation
13. (tie) Nike, Inc.
16. Hewlett-Packard
17. (tie) IBM
17. (tie) Reliant Energy
18. Wyeth
19. Apple Computer

This year's winners all had at least one worksite that met EPA's national standard of excellence for commuter benefits. These are just a few of the ways these companies are leading the pack:

Public Transportation subsidies -- In 2004, Texas Instruments purchased rapid transit passes for their Dallas-based employees, a benefit that's becoming increasingly popular as gas prices climb.

"We have seen a 28 percent increase in ridership from August to September. ... Overall, we have seen a 41 percent increase from the year-to-date average," says Lara Wallentine, manager of environmental, safety and health communications at Texas Instruments.

Carpooling incentives -- At Boeing, finding a carpool or vanpool partner

is just a click away, Weaver says. Employees can search a database to find people in their area willing to ride together. And if an emergency arises during the work day for a non-driving carpooler, Boeing will arrange transportation for that worker to get home quickly.

Biker/walker friendly campuses -- Intel provides bike racks and showers to encourage workers to bike or walk to work, says Gail Dundas, a representative for the company. The company also offers on-site cash machines, fitness centers and food-court style cafeterias.

Flexible work arrangements -- Intel sanctions working from home when appropriate, but the company also allows some workers to choose alternate work schedules. Some workers arrive before 7:30 a.m. and leave as early as 4 p.m., avoiding heavy rush hour traffic.

Easy access to commuter information -- Boeing employees don't just hear about commuter benefits when they're new to the job. The company introduces its commuter benefits to new hires, then follows up in 90 days once the employees get settled, Weaver says. Boeing also distributes relevant information quarterly to ride-share employees.

Laura Morsch is a writer for CareerBuilder.com. She researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues.

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Workaday wheels — Intel leads big companies in widening commute options

By Clint Swett

All it took was a few bagels to turn Mike Finkel into a bicycle commuter.

When his employer, Intel Corp., held a bike-to-work day a few years ago, the company promised a bagel breakfast for riders -- which was enough to get Finkel on his bike that morning.

"It made me realize that biking to work was pretty easy, and it made me do it more often," said the engineer, who pedals the three miles from his Folsom home about twice a week.

Encouraging bicycling, subsidizing its employees' mass transit and van-pool costs, and offering telecommuting are among the efforts that earned Intel the No. 1 ranking among the country's Best Workplaces for Commuters, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's annual review of Fortune 500 companies, which is being released today.

It's the second year the EPA has issued its rankings, and the second year that Intel has claimed the top spot. Eight California-based companies, including three with major operations in the Sacramento area, made the EPA's Top 20 list. Hewlett-Packard Co., with operations in Roseville, ranks No. 16, while Apple Computer, with an Elk Grove facility, is No. 20.



▲ Intel employee Mike Finkel prepares to put his bike in a locker at the Intel plant in Folsom. Finkel, who lives three miles from work, rides his bike to work about twice a week.

Companies are ranked by the percentage of their U.S. work force that is offered choices other than driving a car to work. Intel's 92 percent ranking topped all 88 other Fortune 500 firms that offer significant commuting help to employees. (The Fortune 500 is composed of the nation's largest companies, ranked by annual revenue and compiled by Fortune magazine.)

Intel's commitment to commuting alternatives isn't just window dressing, said Rebecca Garrison, executive director of the 50 Corridor Transportation Management Association, in an e-mail.

"Intel is consistently recognized as a Best Workplace for Commuters because it realizes how important the daily commute is to employee satisfaction and productivity," she wrote.



▲ Front page Business Section Feature

"They don't make commute programs a priority to win awards. They do it because it helps their employees, which ultimately helps the bottom line."

Indeed, that is one of the reasons for the company's emphasis, said Mark Gorman, who oversees Intel's nationwide commute policies.

"It started with us wanting to be a good corporate citizen. Any time you have a large number of employees commuting to a small geographical area, you create traffic issues," Gorman said.

More recently, he said, commuter programs evolved into a perk that's valuable in recruiting and retaining employees.

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Among Intel's programs are a Web site to help workers organize carpools, subsidies to defray mass transit and van pool costs, preferred parking for carpoolers, enclosed lockers for bikes, shower and locker facilities, free van transportation from the Iron Point light-rail station to the Folsom campus and free rides home for those who have to work late.

One Intel worker happy to be car-free is Justin Fraga. When gas prices hit \$ 3 a gallon this summer, the analyst began riding light rail from his midtown apartment to the Sunrise Boulevard station, then biking the remaining eight miles to Folsom.

Now, with light rail extended to just a mile from the Intel campus, it's even more convenient. "I miss the extra exercise," he said of the 16-mile round-trip bike trip. "But I have to carry so much stuff on my back, like my laptop and a change of clothes, this is a lot easier. -- Even if gas prices go back down, I won't go back to driving."

Hewlett-Packard also has extensive commute options, which it extends to 46 percent of its employees nationwide, including those in Roseville.

Telecommuting, subsidized bus passes, preferred parking for carpoolers, showers and lockers, and on-site cafes to eliminate lunchtime car trips are all part of the program, said Jo Ann Shields, the Roseville campus's manager of alternative commute programs.

Efforts to reach Apple were not successful.

As a major employer in Roseville, HP is an active participant in the city's programs to cut down on auto traffic, congestion and pollution.

The problem has become particularly acute because of the area's explosive growth, said Lisa Ferrari, who helps administer commuting programs for the transportation division of Roseville's Department of Public Works.

Between 1990 and 2004, Roseville's population soared 116percent, to 96,600. Traffic on Douglas Boulevard, the city's major artery, climbed 27.7percent, from 55,489 cars a day in 1991 to 70,853 in 2003, according to the latest figures available.

Ferrari's department works with businesses and work sites that have more than 50 employees to promote alternatives to solo driving, such as carpools, bus rides and biking.

She said it's hard to measure how well the programs are succeeding, but promotions like the current Commuter Awareness Week in Roseville are designed to encourage people to get out of their cars.

"Our hope," she said, "is that people will try alternative modes of transportation, and (we) hope it works for them."



▲ Justin Fraga, who lives in midtown Sacramento, takes light rail to Folsom and then pedals a mile to the Intel facility. Before light rail's recent extension to Folsom, Fraga used to ride eight miles from the Sunrise Boulevard stop to Folsom. "I miss the extra exercise," he said.



▲ Folsom resident Mike Finkel rides to work at Intel. The company's programs "made me realize that biking to work was pretty easy, and it made me do it more often," he said. Intel encourages bicycling, subsidizes its employees' mass transit and van-pool costs, and offers telecommuting.